CHAPTER 8
NOTIFICATION AND REPORTING PROCEDURES

*E*ven collection systems with high-performing operation and maintenance programs will eventually experience overflows and backups. When these situations occur it is necessary to complete the proper notifications and reports. **It is essential to obtain the specific requirements and procedures for reporting a sanitary sewer overflow, basement backup, or bypass from the appropriate state or federal regulatory agency.**

Information for this chapter was primarily obtained from the following sources: U.S. EPA's *Guide for Evaluating Capacity, Management, Operation, and Maintenance Programs for Sanitary Sewer Collection Systems* (DRAFT) and *Draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking—NPDES Permit Requirements for Municipal Sanitary Sewer Collection Systems, Municipal Satellite Collection Systems, and Sanitary Sewer Overflows,* Loureiro Engineering Associates' *Model Emergency Response Plan for Municipal Sewage Discharges.*

8.1 Reporting Overflows to State and EPA

It is essential that collection system utilities (both public and private) obtain detailed notification and reporting procedures from their appropriate state and federal regulatory agency. Contact information for EPA Region 1 and the NEIWPCC member states is provided in Section 8.3.

8.1.1 Initial Notification

Initial notification procedures and requirements vary. Generally, initial notification must be made within 24 hours of becoming aware of a sanitary sewer overflow. Some regulatory agencies also require notification of basement backups within 24 hours of becoming aware of an event. There are states with more stringent initial notification requirements, such as Connecticut's requirement for immediate notification.

In all cases, it is necessary for a utility reporting an overflow to speak with a regulatory agency official. Leaving a voicemail message is not appropriate.

The initial report should describe:

- The location of the event.
- The nature of the event (e.g., overflowing manhole, basement backup, pump station failure).
- Time and date utility became aware of the incident.
- Whether or not the event is ongoing.
- Emergency procedures underway to halt or mitigate the event.

Some states have reporting forms listing the specific information they require in an initial report. Massachusetts is developing an electronic notification and reporting procedure, which will be used to report overflow, bypass, and backup events. The draft electronic reporting form is included in the Appendix section of this guide.

8.1.2 Written Report

Written report requirements also vary. Generally, the collection system agency should provide a written report within five days of the time it became aware of the overflow to the proper regulatory authority.

The written report should describe:

- The location of the overflow.
- The receiving water.
- An estimate of the volume of the overflow.
- A description of the sewer system component from which the release occurred (e.g., manhole, constructed overflow pipe, crack in pipe).
- The estimated date and time when the overflow began and stopped or will be stopped.
- The cause or suspected cause of the overflow.
- Steps taken or planned to reduce, eliminate, and prevent reoccurrence of the overflow and a schedule of major milestones for those steps.
- Steps taken or planned to mitigate the impact(s) of the overflow and a schedule of major milestones for those steps.

The immediate and follow-up reporting should be based on observations made when responding to the overflow, and generally should not require detailed analysis or evaluation, unless determined to be necessary by a regulatory agency.

8.2 Immediate Notification

There are certain overflow event situations that require immediate notification of the public and other agencies that might be potentially affected. Immediate notification should be based on a coordinated effort between the collection system agency, State and/or local health officials, and others such as the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC). Immediate notification procedures should fit local needs and be delineated in the emergency response plan. Specific circumstances associated with immediate notification, including which entities are notified, would depend on the circumstances of the overflow event.

Notification should include at the minimum the following information:

- The location of the overflow and affected receiving water.
- A clear statement identifying the potential health problem (e.g., raw sewage has been released; water supply, bathing and/or shellfish bed has been impacted, etc.)
- Measures to avoid exposure (e.g., avoiding contact with ponded water or soil).
- Name and phone number to contact for further information.

The emergency response plan should provide a range of potential options with selection of a specific option or options depending on the immediate circumstance of the overflow.

8.2.1 Immediate Public Notification

Immediate public notification is a critical part of responding to SSOs that may imminently and substantially endanger human health. Appropriate public notification of these overflows can significantly reduce potential public exposure to raw or partially treated sewage.

SSOs that are generally expected to meet the "may imminently and substantially endanger human health" criterion for immediate public notification include major line breaks, overflow events that result in fish-kills or other significant harm, and overflow events that occur in sensitive waters and high-exposure areas, such as protection areas for public drinking water intakes, swimming beaches, waters where primary contact recreation occurs, and shellfish harvesting areas.

Appropriate mechanisms for immediately notifying the public of SSOs that might imminently and substantially endanger human health need to be incorporated into the collection system emergency response plan. Options for consideration include:

- Hand delivery of information bulletins or door hangers to populations exposed to an imminent and substantial human health risk in cases where the population is limited, easily defined, and accessible.
- Temporary (e.g., less than one week) posting at affected use areas (e.g., along a beach front or shellfishing area) in cases where recreational uses are affected on a short-term basis.
- Temporary posting at selected public places with affected use areas such as a bulletin board or public information center at a park or beach, in cases where the public has access to the area selected for display.
- Notices in newspapers or in radio/television public announcements, and messages on local access cable TV in cases where public exposure is likely to be widespread or health impacts severe.
- E-mail list servers.

8.2.2 Immediate Notification of Other Agencies

There are other agencies that need to be immediately notified of SSOs that might imminently and substantially endanger human health.

Public health authorities play an important role in protecting the public from environmental and disease-causing agents. They develop policies and plans to meet local community needs, monitor and disseminate information on community health, provide health-based services and education, and enforce health and safety laws. Depending on local circumstances, the public health authorities—upon notification—may relay the immediate notification to the public. The advantages to letting another authority provide this information to the public include the existence of other notification mechanisms for public health and safety, the training and background of the employees applying the notification criteria, and the need for consistency of message.

Exposure to pathogens in drinking water is a compelling public health issue in this country and worldwide, thus drinking water providers exert considerable control over this route of public exposure to pathogens. To the extent a release from a municipal sanitary sewer system has the potential to contaminate public drinking water supplies, it is essential that the operator of the drinking water system be notified immediately and have the opportunity to respond with stepped-up or targeted monitoring, additional disinfection, or limiting or controlling access to drinking water (e.g., issuing a boil-water advisory).

A mechanism should also be in place for immediate notification of "other affected entities" in the event of an SSO that may imminently and substantially endanger human health. "Other affected entities" may include beach monitoring authorities who do not already receive notification in a role as public health authorities. Such notification might be triggered by an SSO to waters (or their tributaries) within a certain distance of a swimming beach, or an SSO to storm drains that flow to such tributaries.

"Other affected entities" could also include people who are not served by public water systems with private wells that could be impacted by the overflow, downstream food processors with water intakes, local fire or police departments, local and state shellfish agencies, local fish and wildlife officials, and local and regional watershed associations. The emergency response plan should identify mechanisms to provide this notification and identify the entities to be notified.

8.3 More Information

It is essential that collection system utilities (both public and private) obtain detailed notification and reporting procedures from their appropriate state and federal regulatory agency.

Specific contact information for this section was obtained from the EPA Region I and II NPDES websites and the websites of the state environmental agencies.

Connecticut

CT DEP – Bureau of Water Management
Planning and Standards Division
Municipal Facilities Section – (860) 424-3704
www.dep.state.ct.us/wtr/index.htm

Maine

ME DEP – Bureau of Land and Water – (207) 287-7767
www.maine.gov/dep/blwq/stand.htm

Massachusetts

In Massachusetts NPDES permits are jointly issued by EPA New England and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection.
EPA – NPDES Permit Unit Team Leader – (617) 918-1875
www.epa.gov/region1/npdes/index.html
MA DEP – Bureau of Resource Protection
www.state.ma.us/dep/brp/npdes/surfcont.htm

New Hampshire

In New Hampshire NPDES permits are issued by EPA New England.
EPA – NPDES Permit Unit Team Leader – (617) 918-1875
www.epa.gov/region1/npdes/index.html
NH DES – Wastewater Engineering Bureau, Compliance Section – (603) 271-2458

New York

NYS DEC – Bureau of Water Compliance Programs – (518) 402-8173
www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dow/bwcp/index.html

Rhode Island

RI DEM – Office of Water Resources – (401) 222-6800
www.state.ri.us/dem/programs/benviron/water/permits/index.htm

Vermont

VT DEC – Wastewater Management Division: (802) 241-3746
www.anr.state.vt.us/fguide/fguide4.htm#WASTEWATER

EPA Region I

This web site contains a history of the NPDES program, a description of which government agencies issue permits in the six New England states, a New England state-by-state listing of recently issued permits, links to EPA permit application forms and attachments, and a list of contacts and links.
www.epa.gov/region1/npdes/index.html

EPA Region II

All EPA Region II states issue NPDES permits. Contact information for the states' environmental agencies in the EPA Region II states can be obtained at:
www.epa.gov/region02/contact.htm#sisters.

Additional information is available in EPA Region II from:

Division of Enforcement and Compliance Assistance
Water Compliance Branch
(212) 637-3767

Division of Environmental Planning and Protection
Water Programs Branch
(212) 637-3880

Lastly, information pertaining to the national NPDES program can be obtained from the EPA Office of Water at: *www.epa.gov/npdes.*

CHAPTER 8 REFERENCES

Guide for Evaluating Capacity, Management, Operation, and Management Programs for Sanitary Sewer Collection Systems (DRAFT). U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. 2000. EPA No. 300-B-00-014.

Draft Notice of Proposed Rulemaking – NPDES Permit Requirements for Municipal Sanitary Sewer Collection Systems, Municipal Satellite Collection Systems, and Sanitary Sewer Overflows. U. S. Environmental Protection Agency. January 4, 2001.

Model Emergency Response Plan for Municipal Sewage Discharges. Loureiro Engineering Associates. 2002.